

LOWELL SCHOOL COMMITTEE
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Andre P. Descoteaux
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Equity & Access
Subcommittee Meeting

Hilary Clark
Michael Dillon Jr.
Jackie Doherty
Connie A. Martin

Wednesday, March 11, 2021
Zoom – Virtual Meeting
6:30 p.m.

Subcommittee Members Present:	Chairperson Ms. Doherty, Ms. Clark and Ms. Martin
School Committee Members Present:	Mayor Leahy, Mr. Descoteaux and Mike Dillon
School Department Personnel Present:	Ms. Phillips, Chief Equity & Engagement Officer Dr. Duda, Coordinator, Family Resource Center Dr. Chea, Coordinator, ELL

This meeting is being held remotely in accordance with the Governor of Massachusetts' March 12, 2020 order suspending certain provisions of the Open Meeting Law G.L. 30A, Section 20.

Chairperson Doherty called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. The following agenda item was discussed:

- 1. Pre-K Policy**
- 2. School Assignment Policy**

Chairperson Doherty opened the meeting and asked Ms. Phillips to address the Subcommittee. Ms. Phillips stated that Lowell Public Schools offers full-day and half-day Preschool Programs to children four (4) years old by September 1st. Students with Individual Education Plans (IEPs) who are three (3) and four (4) year-old students are assigned to preschool based on their IEP, required services, residency, and available space. Children with IEPs are provided preschool programming on or before their third birthday in accordance with Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. Lowell Public Schools holds a pre-registration period for preschool during the months of February through April each year. At the time of registration, parent(s)/guardian(s) will be asked to indicate three (3) school choices.

A student's preschool placement is for one (1) year and has no bearing on a student's kindergarten placement. There are a limited number of full-day preschool placements in select schools (Cardinal O'Connell Early Learning Center and Frederic T. Greenhalge Elementary). Families must register on-line, but Subcommittee members asked Ms. Phillips to include that the Family Resource Center is available to help any parent that may need assistance with registering their child. Ms. Phillips stated that accommodations will be made for families who need support with submitting an online application. She stated that families in need of support with the online application should contact the District's Family Resource Center. She stated that to be included in the lottery, families must pre-register and provide the following documentation (unless the student qualifies for McKinney-Vento services) before the deadline:

- Proof of Residency
- Child's Birth Certificate
- Current Immunization/Health Records
- Photo ID of Parent/Guardian(s) Registering the Child.

Ms. Phillips stated that given no transportation is provided to preschoolers, the district strongly encourages families to consider selecting schools where the family can ensure on-time, regular attendance by the student. She stated pre-registering before the deadline are entered into the preschool lottery and that the Early Childhood Department diligently considers gender and minority status in adherence with a child's lottery status. A random and blindly generated five-digit number is assigned to each student at the conclusion of the registration period (no later than May 3rd), and recorded against their pre-registration number. Any family registering after the lottery pre-registration deadline will automatically be entered on the preschool waitlist by date of registration. The Early Childhood Department will maintain the preschool waitlist. Pre-registered families will receive written notification providing the student's lottery number and their proposed school assignment by May 31st. Families must respond in writing to the letter, selecting from one of the following options upon receiving notification of preschool assignment. Upon receipt of acceptance of the proposed placement offer, the Early Childhood Department will generate an official assignment letter by June 30th. Students accepting and receiving assignment must attend school or contact their child's assigned school within five (5) days from the start of preschool to maintain enrollment. After five (5) school days, if the family has not contacted the school or the child has not attended, the child will be unenrolled and their seat will be filled by a student on the waitlist. Students with IEPs in foster care or covered under McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act are exempt from this policy.

Ms. Phillips then addressed the recommended Kindergarten Reassignment Policy which delineates the process for returning current Kindergarten students back to their original assignments that were made using the guidelines of 2020-2021 school assignment policy which was adopted in January 2020 and enacted until the passage of the temporary policy in July 2020. She stated that this recommended policy prioritizes the reassignment of students through the 2020 spring lottery process, the reassignment of students impacted by the return of the lottery, students to their original school placement, the assignment of McKinney-Vento students during the 2020-2021 school year, and the reassignment of students who were placed out of zone due to lack of available seats at a school within their zone of residence.

Ms. Phillips informed the Subcommittee that four (4) Family Focus Groups Sessions with four (4) sessions were held in English; two (2) sessions in Spanish, Khmer, Portuguese, and Swahili.

Ms. Doherty stated that it's important to know what transportation costs will be and asked Ms. Phillips if she had any idea.

Dr. Chea informed the Committee that the language placement is completed before assignment to see if they're eligible for English speaking classes.

Ms. Phillips stated that that we need a study in transportation so we are not impacting our most needy families. She also stated that she would like to gain more family and community input and revisit this in December with a follow up Subcommittee meeting.

Ms. Phillips stated that the recommended 2021-22 School Assignment Policy delineates the process for next year's kindergarten students and students new to the school district. She shared the following recommendations discussed regarding new students:

- Revise school placement weights and closely monitor the balance of diverse students across school placement i.e. proximity to school, race/ethnicity, gender, economic status and language
- Revise lottery placement weights which considers factors other than solely "siblings".
- Implement the city-wide lotteries at several points throughout the year with full school placement targeted for mid-August i.e. Elementary School Kindergarten Class at least 50% lottery placement in June, at least 25% in July, remaining % in August 4. Begin the "first-come, first-served" assignment process after mid-August 5. Communicate to incoming kindergarten families that the middle school feeder pattern is under review.

Mayor Leahy asked how this involves transportation and zones and how will it affect them.

Ms. Phillips said they're not proposing changing transportation.

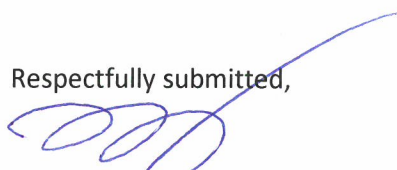
Ms. Doherty asked if Family Resource Center will be expanding their hours.

Ms. Duda responded that they have not and they're working with families during their regular hours.

Ms. Clark made a motion to provide the School Committee with three (3) years of demographic comparison data regarding the number and type of families participating in the full and half-day Pre-K programs; seconded by Ms. Martin. 3 yeas APPROVED

Ms. Clark made a motion to adjourn at 7:45 p.m.; seconded by Ms. Martin. 3 yeas APPROVED

Respectfully submitted,



Latifah Phillips, Chief Equity &
Engagement Officer for Dr. Joel Boyd,
Superintendent and Secretary, Lowell
School Committee

LP/mes